

# Emergency Management

# Digest



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Volume 45, Number 2

Texas Department of Public Safety

Austin, Texas

April-June 1998

## SPORTS AND LIGHTNING DON'T MIX

Countless lightning tragedies have occurred on sport fields in Texas over the years. People who are on sport fields are at higher risk for being struck by lightning.

Sport fields have large open areas where people are often the tallest objects around. Metal bleachers, metal fences, metal light poles, field goal posts or metal soccer goal posts all attract lightning. When lightning hits these objects, its charge travels along the object shocking anyone who is touching it. Lightning can also bounce off any of these objects and strike nearby people.

Schools, athletic programs, day care centers, summer camps, as well as coaches, referees and parents participating in field events need to understand the danger of lightning and be prepared to take immediate action.

Activity policies should clearly state that "if thunder is heard, games and activities will be suspended until the threat passes and thunder is no longer heard."

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No sporting event is worth risking the lives of the people and children on or around fields. When a game or practice is delayed due to a thunderstorm, move everyone indoors or into cars or buses until the storm passes.

Here are some reminders and recommendations:

- Stay tuned to local weather forecasts
- If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to the storm to be struck by lightning.
- Find a low spot away from trees, bleachers, goal posts and other structures. Make sure the area is not prone to flooding.
- If you feel your skin tingle or your hair stand on end, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands on your knees with your head between them. Make yourself the smallest target possible, and minimize your contact with the ground.
- If lightning is occurring and a sturdy shelter is not available, get inside a hardtop automobile and keep the windows up.